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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effectiveness of social services provided to Mexican immigrants in rural California. In addition, the paper offers recommendations for service delivery models and for rethinking the objectives of immigrant social policy. At the most basic level, current social program planning and associated analyses of policy options fail to address important demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of California immigrants. One example is Proposition 187, in which state government overstated the cost of providing education to immigrant children by approximately $800 million per year. Increasingly, immigrants are blamed for the tax burden of inadequate social service programs that are rarely used by immigrants. Recommendations include developing social service programs that are proactive and tailored to the needs of the immigrant population; shifting from individual case management to multitiered community interventions; actively seeking input from communities when developing programs; formulating immigrant policy in multigenerational terms; and orienting social policy toward effecting fundamental changes in community, family, and individual circumstances. The remainder of the paper examines current provision and proposed changes in California's public health initiatives, welfare programs, K-12 education, housing and community development programs, and agribusiness. This paper concludes that successful social policy for immigrants should facilitate functional social integration, and that radical decentralization is the key to cost-effective relevant programs. (LP)

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Formulating Social Policy vis-a-vis Immigrants: Win-Win or Zero-Sum Game?

by
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Edward Kissam

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Presentation-- Panel on Implications of Community Studies
Conference on Immigration and the Changing Face of Rural California

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Introduction

In this paper I examine policy concerns which are two sides of the same coin -- the cost of social program services provided to immigrants to rural California and the effectiveness of these social programs. I then sketch out some strategies for reconfiguring service delivery networks and for re-thinking the objectives of immigrant social policy. For the purposes of this discussion, I treat Mexican immigrants to California as a population paradigm because the overwhelming majority of overall immigration to rural California and, specifically, to the communities which have been studied in depth is, indeed, Mexican. In closing, I then explore the ramifications of several alternative pathways of social policy response to the issue of managing immigration and integrating immmigrants into California communities.

The challenge of formulating viable social program responses for addressing immigrants' needs is of importance not only to immigrants' own well-being but to social policy throughout the society. Because immigrants are different in some well-known ways and probably in other less-well understood ways from native-born population, the question of responding to their social needs immediately calls into question the design of "one size fits all" standardized social interventions. This, in turn, re-opens the important and currently prominent issue of what sorts of program design "flexibility" will best serve to increase effectiveness and decrease taxpayer costs.

Data Limitations, Flawed Analyses, and Blaming the Victim

What I propose to argue is that almost all contemporary analyses which purport to address "immigrant policy" suffer to some degree engage in a form of "blame the victim". These analyses characteristically are flawed due to either: a) compromised data quality (e.g. reliance on CPS or decennial census data) or b) analytic methodologies which fail to address the complexities of the social and economic dynamics in immigrant receiving communities.[1] By neglecting to consider the ways in which we know low-income immigrants to be different from low-income native-born populations and by failing to fully

[1] This is the basis for my critique of Taylor's analyses in "Immigration, Poverty, and Welfare Use in Rural California Towns". Taylor's efforts are well-intentioned but reliance on decennial census data and modelling which fails to consider fully the ways in which the economy and social life of immigrant communities in California are unique is dangerous as the sort of statistical associations Taylor puts forward are always construed by policy makers in terms of causality.

characterize how dramatically life in these communities diverges from the mainstream paradigm, we seriously hamper our ability to forge viable policy responses.

At the most basic level, current social program planning and associated analyses of policy options fail to address the following important demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of immigrants in California and the communities they live in:

1. Demographic profile of immigrants in rural California --- assymetric gender ratios due to preponderance of "lone male" migrants, both legalized shuttle migrants and recently-arrived unauthorized migrants.

2. Migration dynamics -- "Lagged migration" where many male pioneer migrants delay bringing wives or children to the U.S. until they believe they have achieved some measure of employment stability.

3. Patterns of Labor Market Participation -- Very high labor market participation, including significant participation in informal economy, reliance on network connections for finding work, strategies oriented toward decreasing employment instability, minimal appreciation of the complexities of career advancement in an information-based economy, and shifting patterns of labor market engagement from first- to second-and later generation cohorts.

4. Variance in Educational Attainment -- Great variance in educational attainment, strong inverse correlation with age, bi-modal distribution of educational attainment with a relative surplus of elementary school drop outs (compared to the native-born population) and an increasing proportion of relatively well-educated unauthorized immigrants.

5. Cultural and Linguistic Characteristics -- Constrained access to some social programs, minimal orientation toward use of some programs, mutualism, informal mechanisms for responding to crises, language minorities among minorities.

6. Structural Characteristics and Socioeconomic Dynamics of Immigrant-Receiving Areas -- Distribution of industries and occupations, housing patterns and costs, types of community institutions, tax base, linguistic isolation of immigrants, political processes and distribution of power, types of transactions in the informal economy.

An example of how dangerous inadequate analyses immigrant demographics can be is that the Wilson administration overstated the cost of K-12 education provided to immigrant children by approximately $800 million per year during the Proposition 187 debate.[2] Similar inattention to the characteristics of differences between urban and rural immigrant communities are likely to have resulted in gross overstatements of the statewide costs of public assistance and health services provided to immigrants in California.[3] By eliding the demographic and social divergence between immigrant populations and "mainstrem" native-born populations, standard macro-level analyses of the costs of social program services to immigrant populations grossly exaggerate both the costs of service and the utility of those services which are provided.[4]

What does this mean in terms of principles for immigrant policy in rural (and to a certain extent, urban) California?[5] Unfortunately, the most immediate consequence already looms large on the horizon of political life and policy dialogue in California and nationwide. Immigrants as the nominal beneficiaries of a variety of social programs are now, and will be increasingly blamed by nativists for the tax burden of social program services which, characteristically, address their individual, family, and community needs poorly, and which, often, are not actually used at all by immigrants (due to language barriers, transportation barriers, or eligibility restrictions). Yet the tragedy of the public perception of immigrants as an economic burden to society points, conversely, to a strategic approach (or at least some guiding principles) for formulating affordable effective social policy vis-a-vis immigrants.

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[2] E. Kissam, unpublished letter to Philip Romero, Governor's Office of Planning.

[3] Even assuming that the ISD estimate of the cost of immigrants' use of social services in Los Angeles were correct (which it probably is not due to extensive reliance on the Westat data derived from a telephone survey of legalized immigrants), the Los Angeles rates of service utlization cannot be used to estimate rural service use.

[4] For example, Donald Huddle's analyses of immigrant costs tacitly assume that all program-eligible persons actually use services, a serious mis-conception in analyzing immigrant use of social services.

[5] Here, Phil Martin's observation that most areas in California are not classified as "rural" but, rather, as metro areas is important to remember. The reality is that there are increasing structural similarities between many "rural" areas (e.g. the East Side of Fresno County) and "urban" areas.

Principle 1: Configure Social Interventions to Meet Immigrants' Actual Needs

The first guiding principle is that program designs should be pro-active and tailored to address the actual needs of the population; a corollary is that cost-effectiveness is a legitimate concern. Customized program designs can potentially save money by prioritizing needs and responding appropriately to those needs, but only if there is a commitment to pro-actively and meaningfully responding to immigrants' needs. David Hayes-Bautista's analysis of the public health status of Latino urban populations provides exactly the kind of empirical foundation which is needed for designing targeted "smart" public health interventions which can save taxpayers money if they correctly prioritize needs and design appropriate interventions.[6]

One of the ironies of California's experience with the federally-funded SLIAG program reimbursing states for services to immigrants newly-legalized under IRCA was that the regulatory framework prohibited reimbursement for program services which were customized to respond more effectively to the needs of immigrants; one size fits all was mandated.[7] ESL/civics programs funded under SLIAG were, to a certain degree, tailored to respond to the needs of their IRCA-legalized participants but only because program implementation was not carefully monitored and because community-based organizations were often the service providers..[8]

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[6] These generic considerations also are relevant in designing and assessing public health initiatives for rural California immigrants. Our preliminary analyses of Migrant Head Start data on the health of pre-school children and their families at Aguirre International show many opportunities for shifting public health strategy. Similarly a recently-published analysis of the health status of rural California by Joel Diringer suggests that a pro-active preventive public health strategy could result in increased cost-effectiveness.

[7] The SLIAG program was administered by the Office of Refugee Resettlement within HHS and the development of regulations and overall administration of the program was based in part on a mistaken assumption that the immigrant population receiving SLIAG-funded services was similar to the Southeast Asian refugee population which had been served by ORR grantees in the past.

[8] See CASAS (____) for data on program outcomes. Then Senator Art Torres and his legislative staff worked toward legislation which would have permitted pro-active educational program designs with little success. The California Department of Education in 1995 began a 3-year program development initiative, the Latino Adult Education Services project, which is developing curriculum material designed specifically to enhance immigrant adult learners' skills in dealing with commonplace real-life, community, and workplace issues. For a detailed discussion of the instructional design, see Ed Kissam, "El Pais Desconocido: Prototype for an Immigrant Issues Curriculum", MicroMethods, 1993 and Ed Kissam, "Reinventing Citizenship Instruction", Inter-American Institute on Migration and Labor, 1994.

Principle 2: Shift From Individual Case Management to Multi-Stranded and Multi-Tiered Community Interventions

The second guiding principle is that the effectiveness of program designs will be optimized if there is a conscious decision to move away from the model of responding to the need of individuals meeting specific "one size fits all" program criteria and, instead, creating program designs which seek to function simultaneously at multiple levels and use available community resources effectively in addressing individual, family, and community issues.[9] This principle, which probably is applicable to virtually all program designs, is especially important in terms of immigrant policy because the research literature is so unambiguous in showing the crucial role played by family and village networks in responding to immigrants' needs -- both "emergent" needs stemming from unanticipated crises and in long-term strategies designed to constantly solidify and amplify the stability of a given family or social network. Remembering that standard definitions of "underclass" membership include residence in a structurally deformed inner-city neighborhood is an important part of moving to recognize that social programs, ideally, impact not only individuals but entire communities (i.e. social environments). Rural immigrant communities as much as inner cities need to consider community environment as an important part of pro-active strategies.[10]

Current programs' reliance on "outreach" workers in a wide range of program contexts realizes some of the possibilities of this type of strategy. However, such program designs seldom recognize that network-based community workers (i.e. promotoras/promotores, animateurs) might ideally be the primary mode for program intervention. The 19th century bureaucratic myth of professionalism as the primary determinant of effectiveness is, in this regard, particularly problematic for immigrants. For example, in California's adult education system the "field" (i.e. practicioners) not surprisingly have focused on increasing the requirements for instructor certification (to an M.A) rather than decreasing the qualifications, although it is clear that unless the costs of adult learning programs are decreased societal resources will be inadequate to need the

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[9] In principle, "case management" was expected to assure individualized service delivery of social services; there are numerous studies which show that, in practice, case management devolves to enforcing an increasingly complex body of regulations. Similar problems occur in implementing "individualized education" programs within a one-size-fits-all educational system.

needs of even a small fraction of adult learners.[11] Similar disparities are clearly evident in the structuring of social service programs where "case manager" positions are filled on the basis of educational attainment rather than community experience, involvement, and ability to forge innovative intervention strategies. When "case managers" then are used primarily as gatekeepers, "professional" approaches to case management are directly at odds with the needs of populations of immigrant populations whose access to services is determined primarily by "extraneous" factors such as legal status rather than "intrinsic" factors unique to their individual situation.[12]

In summary, re-assessment of the core design of social programs to develop "bottom-up" rather than "top-down" program designs has a good chance of being a "win-win" proposition -- simultaneously increasing program effectiveness and decreasing costs. Making good on this promise would, ideally, entail across-the-board assessment of social policy decisions with explicit consideration of a set of guiding principles derived from improved understanding of the social dynamics of life in low-income immigrant communities (in California and elsewhere). Yet even if this sort of far-reaching conceptual reform is not feasible, positive incremental changes would seem to be well within reach.

Policy Implications of Selected Findings from Community Studies

Here I would like to turn to a fairly summary discussion of two underlying concerns in reflecting on the policy implications of current research. I rely primarily on the findings reported from last year's Asilomar conference. But, in general, I think we can be fairly confident that some themes will stand out throughout the community research. I turn first to guidelines as to how we might proceed in formulating immigrant policy, followed by examples of how such guidelines might play out in formulating policy and configuring service delivery systems.

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[10] Re-visiting Parlier in 1995, Dave Runsten and I heard complaints on incipient gang activity. A fascinating account of the dynamics by which gangs formed in the Los Angeles basin can be found in ___'s autobiographical account, Always Running. XXXX

[11] There is little evidence that educational attainment is significantly correlated with instructor effectiveness.

[12] In reviewing federally-funded "demonstration" projects providing vocational rehabilitation services to farmworkers for the Rehabilitatin Services Administration, I found a pervasive pattern in which a "professional" relying on a medical model of disability would sign off on provision of routine medical services but entirely neglect the other half of the vocational rehabilitation program design --- worker re-training for employment in a new occupation. The result, of course, was creation of social dependency. For details see Ed Kissam, "The Vocational Rehabilitation of Migrant Farmworkers", 1987.

1. Formulating Social Policy Objectives. *Available research seems to clearly indicate that we need to look at immigrant social policy in multi-generational terms and that social policy must be oriented toward effecting fundamental changes in community institutions, as well as in family dynamics, and in individual circumstances.*

If, as immigrants so often say themselves, one of the primary benefits of migration is to be improved opportunities for the children of immigrants, to what extent is this fundamental promise being fulfilled and what can we do about it? The research seems fairly clear in indicating that economic self-sufficiency decreases and social dependency increases in relation to length of time in the U.S. in many of the rural California communities we are studying. The data reported by Alvarado and Mason at Asilomar in 1995 and by Taylor here at Riverside in 1996 are disturbing in this regard.

Rumbaut's work on the educational experience of immigrant children would seem, also, to indicate that things get worse over time rather than better.[13] Recent and very interesting work by Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco examines some of the family dynamics of immigrant assimilation in terms of childrens' school experience, suggesting the possibility that, in direct contradiction with the conventional wisdom, structured efforts to sustain biculturalism as opposed to cultural and linguistic immersion programs might be justified. Elias Lopez's analyses of the high school enrollment patterns of Latinos in rural California are consisten with the observations Runsten and I reported of stagnation in increasing educational attainment in Parlier from 1968 and 1995 seem to make a strong case that reform of community institutions such as schools are an essential complement to social interventions oriented toward remediating individual problems.

The pattern which is beginning to emerge from this research is that "second-generation" immigrants (both U.S.-born children of immigrants and children born in Mexico but raised in the U.S.) are drifting into second-class career pathways. One interpretation of Suarez-Orozco's findings may be that decreased educational aspiration and motivation are linked to their recognition that education will not yield them "fair" returns.[14]

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[13] Ruben G. Rumbaut, "The New Californians: Comparative Research Findings on the Educational Progress of Immigrant Children" in Rumbaut, R. and Cornelius, W. (Eds.), California's Immigrant Children: Theory, Research, and Implications for Educational Policy, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, San Diego, 1995.

From both a theoretical and empirical perspective, poverty and ethnicity are inadequate indicators of relative well-being in the rural immigrant communities which concern us. If we adopt a multi-generational perspective for interpreting our observations about rural California immigrant communities, the most pressing social issues can be seen to relate less to current standard indicators of well-being such as mean annual earnings, or levels of unemployment, or housing density, as to career outlook for second-generation immigrants, the children of "working poor" immigrants.[15]

A multi-generational analytic framework for examining the interaction between immigration policy and immigrant policy is also crucial, because there are important interactions, particularly when we move to look not simply at gross macro-level data but at the dynamics of social and economic interactions in rural immigrant communities in California.[16] In general, all contemporary social policy analysis is weak in its longitudinal dimension but this is a particularly severe methodological problem in understanding immigrant populations, because the real issue is the overall trajectory of assimilation, not well-being at any single point in time. Surely, it will be critical to consider whether "social integration" is linear or non-linear and when, where, and how it may "stall".

If we consider social integration to be a dynamic process of re-iterative interactions between immigrants and the "receiving" society, then it would be particularly useful to examine what might be critical maturational periods in the process of constructing a common social context. Within this kind of analytic framework, then, high priority might be given to social policy interventions targeted to specific points in the process of

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[14] Lewis observes in La Vida that his often miscontrued construct of the "culture of poverty" refers in large measure to perspectives developed by marginalized groups who recognize they are marginal in a "land of plenty". An important element in understanding the career pathways of other disadvantaged groups is that ethnic minorities (in much of the research young African-American males) do not receive the same returns for educational attainment that other groups (e.g. white males) do.

[15] Community level structural characteristics can strongly affect individuals. As is the case in many urban inner-city neighborhoods, labor market problems of teenagers and young adults stem both from lack of available employment but also from inadequate occupational and industrial diversity among local businesses. Thus, Parlier youth's career horizons are likely to be constrained not only by schooling and their parent's lack of familiarity with the primary labor market but, also, by the narrow spectrum of types of businesses in the local community.

[16] Michael Fix has made a valuable contribution in his insistence on the need to be explicit in dealing with immigrant issues by distinguishing between immigrant policy (i.e. social policy vis-a-vis immigrants) and

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immigrants' social integration, for example, the period of family re-unification when a pioneering male migrant brings his foreign-born wife and children to join him.

Similarly, a longitudinal multi-generational analysis might lead to new policy responses to deal with an aging immigrant population, an issue currently of great concern due to the fiscal consequences of immigrant use of SSI. As we demonstrated in the Farm Labor Supply Study, for example, the dynamics of farm labor market supply and demand cannot be accurately analyzed cross-sectionally but only when lagged effects are taken into account. When we conducted the FLSS in 1989, we realized that an important component of the farm labor supply/demand equation would be the labor market "exit" of aging Bracero-era workers. In the next 5 years, California will be facing the same labor supply problem as aging SAW's cease to be willing or able to do field work.[17] Yet the issues which have drawn less attention have to do with what might be done and what might be the impact of pro-active efforts to build new career pathways for aging farmworkers forced out of field work by increasing physical inability to continue (particularly in an economic environment where earnings are based on piece rate earnings). The sort of arbitrary policy response represented by current proposals to "solve" the problem of aging cohorts of immigrants by eliminating their SSI eligibility is only inevitable if we abandon the hope of forging "win-win" solutions", for example, public-private support for "ag-upgrade" training to improve the industry's ability to use these workers to meet growing demand for mid-level management as farm production unit size increases.

Current (and presumably, future) immigration policy also has tacit but powerful family policy dimensions, shifting the costs of child-rearing and dependent support to Mexico, as a means of subsidizing the costs of private sector agricultural producers.[18] From a multi-generational perspective, policy shifts designed to discourage family unity are worrisome in part because the long-term social costs of encouraging the development of female-headed households in Mexico which depend on remittances from "lone male"

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immigration policy (i.e. vis-a-vis migration). By pointing to the need to look for interactions, I do not want to undercut the need to look separately at both domains.

[17] The mean age of SAW's at application for legalization was about 29 years, meaning that the "average" SAW is now about 37 years old. An important topic for future research will be to examine the alternative career paths chosen by the SAWs who were older at legalization and those who were younger.

[18] There are many factors involved in the shift away from on-farm free housing provided to migrant families, but one important factor is the fact that IRCA's anti-family provisions was meant to facilitate the shift to lone male workers who could be housed in barracks or pay for lodging in the private underground housing market.

workers in rural California are not well-known.[19] What the work of Alarcon, Massey, Cornelius, and other researchers seems to me to indicate is that immigration policies oriented toward family dis-unity strongly stimulate future migration while, at the same time, increasing the risk of social pathologies in California rural communities such as widespread alcohol abuse and economic pathologies such as the widespread proliferation of grossly sub-standard housing for "lone male" migrants.[20]

In summary, current social accounting approaches to policy analysis are seriously flawed as a basis for rational immigrant social policy because they ignore the future impacts of current individual, family, and community dynamics. By focusing either on the individual "case" or, alternatively, on macro-economic constructs with only an uncertain linkage to actual social reality, they fail to recognize either the current socioeconomic value of intact families and communities or the future costs of fragmented families and structurally distorted communities. While this is a national problem, it is especially severe in the case of California's rural immigrant communities. Current proposals for short-term strategies seem exquisitely poised to give rise to long-term negative consequences. Anti-immigrant proposals such as the recent House legislation proposing to limit immigrant children's eligibility for schooling, cut immigrant eligibility for public assistance (including post-seccondary and higher education) and preventive health care services, while grossly inequitable to first-generation immigrants is likely to bring about even more damage in 15-20 years.

The current focus on short-term cost/benefit analyses and refusal to reasonably consider long-term outcomes (both anticipated and unanticipated) is essentially a national investment in creation of a rural Latino underclass. From a longitudinal perspective, it is essential to include in the analysis not only the negative impacts on immigrants themselves but on the society at large, including the opportunity costs of foregoing the econnomic and social benefits of an investment in building a multi-cultural workforce to better compete in

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[19] This is clearly an area where additional binational research initiatives are needed. My colleagues in adult education in Mexico have recently expressed serious concern about the growing numbers of households headed by women with very little or no education (personal communication, Hector Hernandez Llamas, INEA).

[20] Arguably, very strong patterns of nortenizacion give rise to social pathologies in Mexican sending communities also. Mines, Cornelius and others have described some. My colleague Anna Garcia's 1995 fieldwork for Robert Bach on the issue of sustainable development provides even more and more recent detail on impacts on social processes and economic patterns in rural Mexico.

the global economy. In following current short-term strategies, the losers will be not only immigrants but the American public in general.

2. Configuring Service Delivery Systems

Historically, the currently prevailing administrative and program planning framework for social programs sponsored by federal, state, and local government stem from two waves of federal action -- legislation in the 1930's under the New Deal and legislation from the 1960's War on Poverty. The conceptual models underlying these programs have been criticized vigorously from both the left and right for good reasons. Here I want to focus primarily on the shortcoming of these conceptual models as a basis for understanding or responding to immigrants' needs.

Arguably, the "first-generation" wave of "big ticket" social programs -- AFDC, MedicAid, SSI, (and, later Food Stamps) -- were naive in that they adopted a "charity model" of social program intervention and, in practice, gave virtually no attention to social dynamics. The second wave of programs, namely those stemming from the post-1964 "War on Poverty" gave serious attention to social dynamics and, in fact, strongly emphasized community empowerment and self-help as a key element in service delivery. The original Head Start program model perhaps best exemplifies these second-generation programs with its emphasis on a multi-component program, addressing the needs of both parents and children, and seeking to empower parents to actively work to change community institutions.[21] While we've learned from experience over the past several decades that this sort of program design works because it seriously considers the dynamics of the lives of marginal populations and seeks to tailor the intervention to impact the "deep level" social dynamics of individuals or communities. However, as matter of historical fact, none of these programs took into account the special circumstances faced by immigrants. Arguably, then, these more sophisticated programs have suffered from an ethnocentric model of service delivery which in an everyday context may often be as limited as the first-generation programs.[22]

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[21] Lizbeth Schorr's detailed and thoughtful discussion of the attenuation of the original Head Start program model, Within our Reach, provides an excellent example of the consequences of "take away" provisions. Jonathan Kozol's recent essay on life in the South Bronx, Amazing Grace, is, while more journalistic and less analytic a powerful cautionary tale about bureaucratic ineffectiveness.

[22] The first-generation programs have been "enhanced" in some cases with additional add-ons designed to improve their efficacy (e.g. the various editions of welfare-to-work services provided in connection with

From a practical perspective, a high priority is to consider how the current "third-wave" of program designs emanating from an across-the-board regressive social policy might affect immigrants and whether the service delivery arrangements envisioned in various current "block grant" programs might be at least mitigated.[23] Aside from the obvious political rationale of increased opportunities for patronage, the policy justification for the current legislative trend toward block grants is that decentralization and increased programmatic flexibility will result in programs better attuned to the "local needs" of communities.

While this argument is, in principle, an attractive one, in practice the rationale disintegrates. One of the most striking observations from contemporary farm labor research is the extent to which immigrant enclaves, or as Rochin calls them, *colonias*, in rural California differ from surrounding communities. "Local needs" and local responses must be determined at the community level, not at the state or county level. While communities with Latino leadership such as Parlier were remarkably clear in prioritizing local needs and creative in responding to them, there are, mixed in with the success stories, innumerable instances in which local priorities or social program delivery systems were constrained at the county level. The current political reality is that the voting power in most of California's rural counties remains in the hands of large business interests and middle-class Anglo leaders, not in the hands of the residents of rural Latino colonias. Given this situation there is little likelihood that many of the benefits of decentralization will accrue to first or second-generation immigrants.

A recent GAO report states quite unequivocally that the shift to block grants requires meaningful provisions to maintain accountability for achieving programmatic objectives and safeguards to assure equitable access to program benefits. But how might accountability be achieved, given the way in which the political deck is stacked against immigrant communities in rural California? One way in which the current research can

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AFDC) while the second-generation programs have been weakened by a variety of take-aways or deletions from the original model as documented by Schorr in relation to HeadStart.

[23] As Michael Katz argues in The Undeserving Poor, social policy is commonly formulated to serve as carrier for a variety of subliminal sub-texts expressing or punctuating the distinction between "good" and "bad" people. The difficulty of talking about many of the current initiatives is that they are not meant to "work" but rather to convey a popular message, often one with punitive dimensions. In the discussion below I disregard the irrational but highly structured facets of current policy initiatives which do not deserve serious attention.

make a contribution in this arena is to clarify the distinction between geographically-defined communities and "virtual" communities and the implications for social policy and program planning.

An important recognition stemming from migration research over the past decade is the extent to which social and economic life in communities such as those of rural California are transnational ones, i.e. geographically discontinuous clusters of social interactions linked by family and village networks. By the same token, geographically-defined communities very commonly consist of multiple co-existing "virtual communities", for example, the five distinct networks we observed in Parlier, the Zacatecan and Oaxacan networks Krissman describes in MacFarland.

The accountability argument, then, could, in theory, be re-phrased to suggest that states should be held accountable for providing effective service to "virtual communities" including immigrant networks, as well as traditionally defined "special populations" such as the homeless, etc. This argument is both theoretically sound and practically motivated; flexibility can be legitimately justified but only if it is coupled with accountability.[24] In California and other rural areas in high immigration states, local (i.e. county) government has no special expertise in responding to the needs of farmworkers or other rural Latino immigrants, although statewide or regional Latino-oriented consortia can.

In principle, this argument about the utility of targeting services to a "virtual community" provides a practical rationale for binational collaboration in responding to the needs of a transnational migrant population. From a rational perspective, of course, the most effective social policy is likely to be one which affects the entire context of the target population's lives -- in this case a North American region including closely-linked areas of Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and the United States. While the concept of the North American Development Bank was a breakthrough in terms of addressing the reality of economic integration, there is still no viable vehicle for rationally addressing the reality of social integration between Mexico and the U.S. Some progress may, nonetheless, be possible. For the past year I have been working on a project sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education oriented toward collaboration between the adult education systems

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[24] In fact, many of the current proposals have very weak provisions for accountability. Arguably, the real issue is whether social programs can be held accountable for doing a good job at fulfilling their mission and, here, past experience is mixed, although initiatives such as the National Performance Review hold marginal promise.

of Mexico-US border states to serve migrants at any point in their migration circuit. Whether this effort will ultimately give rise to program designs affording the "anytime, any place" services we envision for transborder adult learning is unclear. Nonetheless, the effort seems worthwhile. Similarly, interventions such as informal presentations on "workers rights" made by legal services providers in the Mexican villages sending workers to the U.S. are an obviously reasonable response to the reality of transnational migration. Obviously, the need for transnational social program service delivery systems in areas such as public health (e.g. AIDS prevention efforts, maternal-child health, immunization programs) is equally powerfully justified.

Agendas for Configuring Social Programs to Effectively Serve Immigrants

The scope of the current paper does not allow me to explore the very interesting and complex issues as to what the short, medium, and long-term impacts of various Proposition 187 type anti-immigrant legislative initiatives will be. In discussions with my colleague David Runsten over the past year, I think we have sketched out at least a solid analytic strategy for developing scenarios which demonstrate how complex some of the consequences of actually implementing some of this sort provisions will be.

Here I would like not to focus on a direct critique of Proposition 187-style initiatives but concentrate instead on sketching out some of the considerations which might be taken into account if we were to attempt to develop rational social policies designed to integrate immigrants into California society as cost-effectively as possible. Ideally, such an effort would entail linkage between:

a) efforts to develop effective social programs,
b) regulatory/legal initiatives designed realistically to change the social and economic universe in which immigrants live, and
c) efforts to moderate and manage but not eliminate Mexico-U.S. migration.

Here, I focus on social program planning, even though the regulatory/legal framework and immigration/migration policy are all part and parcel of rational policy response.

1. Public Health Initiatives.

Public health is a paradigm case of a social program area where customized initiatives could save taxpayer dollars while improving the health and well-being of rural immigrant populations in California. Bonnie Bade's description of the ways in which eligibility restrictions on Mixtec women's access to routine health care in Madera serve, ultimately, to increase public health costs provides an extraordinarily clear-cut picture of how dysfunctionnal current approaches are (not just in terms of improving patients' health but in terms of health care costs). Ironically, as Bade describes it, the unfunded native system of healing is the only one which, for example, addresses the psychosocial dimensions of Mixtec women's adaption (e.g. experiencing *corage*) to life in an unwelcoming Californian society

Other efforts to directly examine the actual situation of immigrants show the possibilities for pro-active cost-savings. For example, a study conducted by Aguirre International for the Migrant Head Start program within ACYF shows that migrant pre-schoolers are quite adequately immunized, seem to have very few nutrition problems, and a very low incidence of congenital disabilities. Yet, other pressing needs remain unmet. At the same time that Mexican immigrants in rural California are a extraordinarily health population, immigrants they have minimal access to family counseling programs to prevent or respond to domestic violence, to alcohol abuse prevention and treatment programs, and probably inadequate access to preventive education on HIV infection or other STD's. A shift in priorities to simply maintain the currently successful MCH primary care efforts while increasing attention to behavioral factors likely to affect children's and adults' health would be judicious. In a population known to be experiencing serious economic and social stress (factors presumed to be related to domestic violence, alcohol, and drug abuse), with direct evidence of high levels of alcohol-related highway accidents, and with elevated risk of tuberculosis transmission due to grossly overcrowded housing, and elevated risk of STD transmission due to large numbers of men separated from their families, reflection on the actual array of health needs of the immigrant population would justified as prominent elements in any customized public health strategy for rural California.

Because there is reason to believe that at least several facets of rural California immigrants' unaddressed public health needs are behaviorally-linked, public health outreach and community mental health initiatives using *promotoras* and *promotores* would be both effective and affordable. Applied research and investments in improved data

management and surveillance systems would make it possible to rationally assess the degree to which issues such as tuberculosis prevention (a potential concern in the sort of crowded housing we see in case study communities) and treatment or immunization for diseases such as Hepatitis B should be prioritized.[25] However, in this area, where there might be opportunities for a "win-win" social policy, current anti-immigrant proposals would prohibit spending on preventive health initiatives but allow cost-ineffective spending on emergency care. Applied policy research targeted to more accurately profiling immigrant populations' needs remains a low priority, despite the important findings and policy suggestions of researchers such as Hayes-Bautista, Bade, and others.

2. AFDC

First-generation Mexican immigrants' use of AFDC appears to be quite low in rural California. While the political juggernaut toward barring legal immigrants as well as unauthorized immigrants from receiving AFDC is front-age news, virtually no attention has been given to the possibility of targeted efforts to assist immigrant women (many of them in two parent AFDC-U families) to improve their ability to compete in the labor market. In fact, GAIN regulations, due to a policy preoccupation with decreasing the proportion of long-term "chronic" welfare-dependent female-headed families receiving AFDC, established an order of service priorities which has most probably made it impossible for immigrant women voluntarily seeking GAIN services to actually receive the adult basic skills, ESL, and vocational training services which would be needed to stabilize their families economically.

The set of policy issues associated with immigrants' use of AFDC is interesting because it presents the paradigm (or paradox) of immigrant social policy so starkly. In fact, among farmworkers who do receive AFDC, cost per case is likely to be low because families usually become eligible as a result of seasonal unemployment. A population which we do know from current research to consist of "working poor" families with low levels of dependency on public assistance and high attachment to the labor force are denied the primary intervention which would serve to improve their family self-sufficiency and serve

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[25] Gil Ojeda of the University of California has developed disaggregated data on county-by-county variations in the incidence of some types of disease in rural California. However, currently available data do not seem adequate to assess the extent to which observed incidence of some conditions are cause for concern. Joel Diringer has also developed a system of indicators which would be extremely useful as part of a pro-active public health strategy.

to mitigate the ever-present possibility of family breakup resulting in a "full-fledged" welfare case (household with young children headed by a female with minimal job skills).

Interestingly, the policy issues associated with rural California immigrants' use of AFDC also put into sharp focus the linkage between immigration (migration) policy and immigrant (integration) policy as the fact that seasonally unemployed unauthorized workers are ineligible to file an application for or receive unemployment insurance serves as a means of providing an important subsidy to the California agricultural industry whose UI rates are lowered because they do not suffer an "experience modification" increasing their contribution rate when they lay off workers. Thus, some portion of the costs of AFDC and other public assistance support for citizen children of unauthorized parents (a major concern to the anti-immigrant lobby) are costs which actually should be born by the private sector but which are, in practice, externalized and shifted to taxpayers.

In summary, then, here too political and public fascination with the idea of a social policy designed to decrease taxpayer costs by denying service to a population perceived as "undeserving" is, in fact, probably increasing long-term costs by precluding the development of a rational service strategy, i.e. prioritization of short-term public assistance coupled with intensive job training consisting of concurrent basic skills remediation and bilingual vocational training targeted to women in rural immigrant families.[26]

3. K-12 Education

An obvious issue faced in California's rural communities is that immigrant children are faced with characteristic learning challenges. Their parents, also, experience difficulties in participating actively in school governance or in their children's education. The problems they face are myriad, including, in some cases, hostility from Anglo or even Chicano administrators and teachers, little appreciation of the skills their children will need to develop to function effectively in a complex information-based economy, difficulties in communicating with even those teachers and administrators who are sympathetic and who may happen to speak no Spanish, and little experience in advocating vigorously on their

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[26] A Rockefeller Foundation study of alternative welfare-to-work program designs found that the bilingual vocational training model linking concurrent ABE/ESL and skills training was the most effective in the nation -- in contrast to the punitive GAIN model which "punished" welfare mothers by requiring basic skills remediation prior to job training (a model which was known to have no theoretical basis in learning theory).

children's behalf. Investments in practical efforts to improve immigrant children's educational outcomes are, of course, a paradigm case of whether multi-generational outcomes are a societal priority.

An interesting finding from our study of Migrant Head Start is that few rural K-12 systems coordinate closely with the Migrant Head Start program. My hypothesis is that this is really an indication of a clash in organizational cultures, as the Head Start program model is specifically designed to de-emphasize staff educational qualifications and to positively emphasize community experience while the rural K-12 system is relatively hierarchical stressing certification and credentialing based on educational attainment and standardized curriculum frameworks in contrast to the developmental-based assessment systems relied on in Head Start.

The hierarchical "one-size-fits-all" orientation of the K-12 system is unfortunate because one of the most promising possiiblities for building strong school-family linkages in immigrant communities would be to rely on immigrants with somewhat better than average education or professional training in Mexico to engage in a variety of activities where they were given more autonomy and responsibility than typical teacher aides in developing learning programs to maximize immigrant children's school success.

At the level of national and state policy, current trends give mixed messages about the viability of customized strategies fine-tuned to effectively serve immigrant children in rural communities. In theory, current educational policy favors family literacy programs (a U.S.-developed instructional model fortuitously appropriate for working with immigrant families), as well as pro-active efforts oriented toward meaningful parental involvement, and individualized education. In practice, things may be somewhat different. Although the California Department of Education's Office of Bilingual Education has, in the past, actively promoted community-based family literacy programs in immigrant communities, this office has now been reorganized out of existence and it is unclear how many schools in rural California actually sponsor family literacy programs for immigrants.[27] Migrant Education regulations, while nominally encouraging family involvement in children's schooling, have not had spectacular success in convincing local school districts to meaningfully empower immigrant parents. At the federal level, EvenStart, a promising

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[27] Federally-funded projects have been sponsored in Los Banos, Parlier, Yuba City, and Woodland in recent years.

model for the situation faced by immigrants, is slated to be folded into mainstream funding and bilingual education programs, in part because of unclear evidence as to their effectiveness, are increasingly controversial and attention to biculturalism is even less likely to be oriented toward cultural maintenance which might provide a means for involving immigrant parents' more powerfully in their children's education.

In terms of efforts to prepare immigrant children and their parents for life-long learning in the information society, the current policy picture is equally muddied. The Wilson administration has vigorously opposed the federal Education 2000 program, one of the most promising efforts to actually configure K-12 education to respond to anticipated labor market, social, and civic skills demands that children will face in the 21st century. Whether or not the small rural school districts where immigrant children are located have, as a matter of local policy, configured educational priorities to allow immigrant children to fulfill their potential as bi-cultural workers in an era of U.S. expansion in a global economy, is unclear. However, I would wager they haven't. The data reported by Lopez at Asilomar seems to me ominous as the most obvious explanation for the patterns he observed is that there is deliberate tracking. Similarly, the report by Borrego and Runsten of efforts to create a de facto segregated school system in Santa Cruz County do not inspire confidence that local school districts are moving pro-actively to fashion programs specifically designed to serve immigrant children's interests.

3. Housing and Community Development Initiatives and Agribusiness

Effective immigrant social policy would also seem to entail initiatives designed to impact the "social universe" in which immigrants live, the important contextual variables which make such an important contribution to whether the rural immigrant population becomes an underclass or not. Ed Taylor's summation at Asilomar was on the mark in re-emphasizing the point that many researchers have made which is that the problems of rural immigrant enclaves in California stem in large measure from mal-distribution of wealth. As Don Villarejo noted several years back, FVH production has expanded rapidly as worker earnings have fairly steadily fallen (due both to under-employment and eroding wage rates). Ultimately, effective social policy initiatives will need to be designed so as to have positive social impacts on their nominal beneficiaries while, at the same time, changing the structural conditions which perpetuate the ever-widening expanse between poverty and riches in rural California. Here it seems important to either confess that there is not the

political will to formulate effective social policy or, if there is, to re-assess what kinds of legislative, regulatory, or programmatic initiatives are "feasible" and which are not.

Housing policy, fairly clearly, deserves to be given high priority. One of the most striking consequences of the very large fluctuations of labor demand in California agriculture is that the costs of housing a casually-employed work force are shifted to the workers themselves. Given the fact that the typical crash-pad fee for lone male workers to live in crowded sub-standard housing is $25-30 per week, housing costs probably make up somewhere in the order of 30% of net income. This is because the farm labor force is typically underemployed. Although a fully-employed worker earning $200 per week would be paying only 12-15% of his income for housing, in actuality, many workers who return yearly to Mexico as shuttle migrants only earn in the order of $4,000-$5,000 per year due to under-employment.

One possibility is to craft social policy responses to housing problems as "targeted initiatives" designed to mitigate the structural deformations of social and economic transactions associated with California agribusiness while, at the same time, directly benefiting migrant farmworkers. Given the structural reality that the farm labor housing market in California is now a private one and that peak season labor force numbers grow to more than triple the year-round labor force, a more rational policy alternative to the "liberal" one of increasing funding for publically-supported farm labor camps would be to require agricultural employers to provide "housing benefits" -- ideally via housing vouchers to workers employed during peak season employment. This sort of customized policy response would have the advantage of not only allowing workers flexibility in securing housing (avoiding the problems of worker control associated with on-farm lodging) but, also, providing incentives to minimize the size of the peak season labor force.

Alternatively or concurrently, targeted policy options might involve "carrots" as well as "sticks" seeking to modify the organizational behavior of California agribusiness. An intriguing response to the situation we find in rural California would be along the lines of the R Corporation proposals being advanced by Senators Daschle and Bingaman.[28] Were agribusiness serious about decreasing regulation and corporate tax rates, the R Corporation "community responsibility agreements" (even if somewhat watered down)

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[28] Robert Kuttner, "Rewarding Corporations that Really Invest in America", Business Week, February 26, 1996.

would represent an appropriate response to some of the characteristic problems experienced by agricultural workers. Particularly useful would be portable multi-employer health and pension plans, tax-deductible employee training and support for export promotion and technological development might even be thrown in.

Another possibility which I think still has merit is a proposal we first put forward five years ago in the final report of the Farm Labor Supply Study (Kissam and Griffith, 1991). This proposal would entail removing the current cap on unemployment insurance rates to require agribusiness to pay its fair share of unemployment insurance costs via "experience modifications" reflecting the industries' generation of total unemployment. In an ideal world, the revenue stream from this sort of "flexible" UI contributions policy might also be used to fund agricultural worker training or skills upgrading. For example, agricultural employers might be able to decrease their unemployment insurance contribution rates by participating in multi-employer pools among firms producing complementary crops to employ workers who finished work in one crop in the next crop, thereby serving to mitigate the very sharp build-ups of underemployed workers which accumulate during peak harvest or thinning periods. It should be noted that such an initiative would be affordable. At worst, it would be cost-neutral to the public sector (e.g. if additional UI contributionns were shifted to investments in worker training). At best such a proposal would decrease public sector costs by partially replacing public-sector expenditures on public assistance costs with privately funded social insurance support.

Final Conclusions

I would like to close by focusing on two of the three policy questions specifically posed to us for the conference here in Riverside. I'd like to begin with what I believe is the more complex issue, that is, understanding what efforts might positively affect immigrants' successful integration into U.S. society, remembering that we must look at this process within a multi-generational perspective This, then, provides a foundation for considering the implications of current legislative initiatives towards decentralization and block grants.

First, I think we need to be clear that no single variable affects the success of social and economic integration. Formally, it seems crucial to look both at first-order relationships and at interactions among variables which serve to affect immigrants' well-being and the well-being of communities undergoing social and economic change. We also

need to develop more finely-textured analytic frameworks for characterizing immigrant communities and understanding their social and economic dynamics. Practically, the over-arching consideration we must address is not only what "best" to do, but how we harmonize the different strands of social policy initiatives.

Secondly, there is little reason to believe that the taxonomy of variables as indicators of socioeconomic status which we do track necessarily corresponds to immigrants' own sense of the multiple dimensions of well-being in their own lives. Listening carefully to immigrants, I think, we might hear that it would be o.k. to do less things for them but to do what we do better. The taxonomy of needs which forms the data foundation for configuring, funding, and managing government social programs' response to low-income persons' needs, particularly the needs of immigrants, are only weakly aligned to the ways in which the nominal beneficiaries think about their lives, the social dynamics of their communities, and the sort of help they would actually like in confronting the problems they face

We need, therefore, to turn our attention, I think to newly-constructed indices of social well-being and new clusterings of service interventions in general, becoming more genuinely open to the perspectives of the important groups of stakeholders consisting of the proposed beneficiaries of our social policy, including immigrants. Part of such a shift in perspective might well involve closer attention to both "social justice" (as measured by tone and types of social interactions) and "social equity" (as measured by service access) as alternative indicators of social policy success

Contemporary social policy is nominally built on utilitarian Millsian ethics more than on Kantian ethics.[29] This is not surprising given the prevailing contemporary reductionistic framework which tends to assess social policy in terms of dollar flows more than on impacts on people's lives.[30] However, this type of analytic framework is

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[29] As a policy framework, Kantian ethics, essentially point one's attention toward the "meaning" of social interactions, contracts, promises, etc. and how individual or group behavior change the entire fabric of social interaction. Modern analytic attention to such issues has been an important element in the work of writes such as J.L. Austin and H.L.A. Hart.

[30] Even worse, social policy analysis has generally devolved to debate as to how proposed legislative and regulatory changes might affect one or another agency stakeholder. This burgeoning "public sector capitalism" in which public sector entities compete for revenue with scant attention to the ultimate impacts of policy or funding shifts upon the nominal beneficiaries of social programs makes it difficult to reliably assess social policy alternatives since there is dwindling attention to assessing the outcomes of program interventions.

ethnocentric and dangerously narrow in its scope, given the growing social tensions among classes and rapidly escalating anger among socially and economically disadvantaged groups about the "social meaning" of the current situations they face in their lives, their communities, and the behavioral style of institutions which serve them only poorly.

Several years back, during hearings of the Governor's Coordinating Council for Farmworker Services, I had occasion to listen to many hours of farmworker testimony on program priority-setting; the most striking observation was that even agency and department directors genuinely committed to "doing something" to improve farmworker services appeared unable to hear that California farmworkers themselves placed a very high priority on intangibles such as "dignity", "respectful treatment" by government agencies, concepts which simply did not track well in terms of standard organization measures for assessing service quality (even in an era of firm allegiance to TQM). My sense from those hearings has changed little over the last several years -- namely that the feasibility of low-cost "affordable" genuinely welcoming policies toward immigrants has not to date been seriously explored because organizational objectives and indicators of success are so poorly aligned to the desires/demands of their beneficiaries.

The possibility is that we might affordably be able to do "enough" if our policy orientation were toward social outcomes (including the "social meaning" of government policies), rather than inputs (funding). But, at the same time, we must, inevitably, recognize that the foundation for contemporary social policy may not, in fact, be the rational utilitarianism it purposes to be.

The reality is that contemporary social policy is a way to send a "social message" with multiple semantic strata, including the message that cultural and linguistic change is threatening, that the society wants immigrant workers but not their families, that contemporary society is frightened by the possibility of increasing dependency, etc. However, it would seem that there must be a more affordable way to communicate that we "care" about native-born Americans by creating massive "social service" bureaucracies to obliquely address their needs and punctuating this message of "caring" by diligently excluding a population perceived as "undeserving" (foreign-born immigrants).

What does the recognition of exclusionary social programs as exercises in political rhetoric suggest in practice? What it means, I think, is that an important component of a pragmatic response to the real-world devolution of our immigrant policy must be to turn a

metaphorical spotlight on the anxieties, crises, and perplexities we face in terms of broad domestic social policy and, then, systematically examine the semantic role played by immigrant scapegoating in our political dialogue which really is targeted as much to anxieties about native-born Americans as to foreign-born Americans. The goal of such an exercise, of course, would be to see to what extent we might be able to forge "win-win" scenarios rather than "zero-sum games" to heighten the general public's sense of well-being. Dissecting the rational and irrational strands of policy options would, at least, have the advantage of heightening accountability of all involved in such debates.

Focusing on and refusing to ignore social tensions, explicitly attempting "to work things out" is an essential first step recommended by Robert Bach as a result of the research in The Changing Relations Project and, I think, one of a number of valuable principles articulated there, including the exhortation to seek a basis for addressing problems experienced in common by both immigrants and native-born populations. In this context, the thrust of my suggestions earlier in this paper is to argue that a crucial determinant of immigrants' successful integration is the willingness of communities and the society to engage in what might be called "reality-oriented" responses to the perceived threats of immigration and cultural pluralism. Proposition 187-style policy responses hinging on naive models of individual and social behavior (e.g. Make life here more unpleasant for immigrants so migrants will not be "pulled" to the U.S) or counter-factual wishes (e.g. Make 'them" go home) are part of language/societal ritual for which we need to find substitutes because the society cannot afford, either fiscally or socially.

In particular, the idea that social policy could or should be based primarily on fiscal considerations (underlying the Wilson administration's position that Proposition 187 relates only to fiscal policy, not to social policy) is dysfunctional for all concerned. Even if adequately funded and generously intended, the traditional fiscal model of policy, an aggregation of independent program "line items" is simply too atomistic. At a bare minimum, serious efforts to facilitate immigrant's integration into California social life, or at least, mitigate major impacts will require cross-program, cross-agency, services oriented toward impacting families and communities as well as individuals.

Calling for such a commitment is not fuzzy humanism; a wide range of research seems to clearly indicate that interventions which seek to find and impact the single "critical" variable for social intervention fail because administrative overhead remains high and the minimal impacts achieved evaporate. To be worthwhile pursuing at all, effective

interventions would seemingly need to be -- a) multi-dimensional (with careful attention to integration of services) , b) focused enough to achieve "critical mass", and c) culturally responsive in order to allow maximum leveraging of social resources from informal networks.

From my perspective, then, one possible strategy for seeking new solutions is to seek to debate immigrant social policy less in terms of "social equity" -- i.e. who gets too much and who gets too little -- and more in terms of defining policy options which could more effectively promote community, family, and individual well-being. One aspect of this issue is how to make people (immigrants) feel cared about, even more urgently than cared for. That, ultimately, entails, I believe, a variety of pro-active efforts to facilitate, encourage, and expand our narrow notions of what constitutes civic and community participation (e.g. the voting ritual) and replace these models with more three-dimensional ones (e.g. democracy as a political process including discussion, controversy, fighting among special interests for relative advantage, fighting for funding and media exposure, etc.) Another aspect is to recognize, acknowledge, and condemn social injustice even where no immediate practical responses are feasible -- e.g. wage and hour enforcement, sub-standard housing.

Freire has criticized traditional educational practice for adopting the metaphor of nutritional force-feeding as its model for designing instructional programs to assit people in learning. My critique of traditional social policy is analogous. Unless we recognize the pitfalls of a form of "social capitalism", a meting out of benefits and costs, the hope of optimizing interventions, of finding "appropriate" social technology is a dim one. To be sure it is now *de rigeur* among progressives to praise empowerment and self-sufficiency but the evidence of organizational commitment to a solid agenda for empowering marginalized populations is more ambiguous.

Quite practically, the real pressing policy issue, then, is not, for example, whether or not legal (or even unauthorized immigrants) should be entitled to AFDC but, rather, what types of welfare-to-work interventions (program designs) might best promote the common good of assuring family stability and self-sufficiency. We should not be surprised to find that Mexican immigrants, coming from a society with few economic safegaurds are not initially oriented toward using social services. Perhaps we should equally clearly recognize that, in a society where our primary index of social justice, being

treated "right", is equated with "getting my fair share", immigrant orientation toward using public assistance, while initially low, increases with length of time in the U.S.

Given these considerations, the flexibility held out as the prime rationale for decentralizing social programs has some potential (but only if it can be purged of the clear sub-text of justifying and facilitating inequitable treatment of different groups. That suggests, then, that perhaps the only hope for truly effective, affordable, and responsive social policy is to seek yet more decentralization, a "radical" form of decentralization putting social policy decisions in the hand of genuinely local, grassroots groups, perhaps even in the hands of individuals via increasing reliance on voucher-based services. But, at whatever level such decisions are made, a commitment to accountability is essential. Clearly "flexibility" per se can allow responsiveness either to special interests or to the common good.[31] The problem with state-level block granting is both the legitimate technical one that the social texture of California and most areas is so heterogeneous that state-level decision-makers don't understand any of these micro-universes which make up contemporary society.

If, in fact, there is any hope for some degree of "radical de-centralization" as a basis for functional social policy, then a very high priority must also be given to efforts to make the democratic process at least moderately effective, make the "invisible hand" of democracy something more than an antiquated superstitious belief. Pro-active empowerment is, then, crucial and must involve structured efforts to both change how people feel and what they do in terms of civic behavior. The most striking aspect of the focus group research I've been involved in over the past several years on census undercount is the degree to which the message from low-income Americans that the society, literally described as "people up in the system" (the mainstream, the power structure), don't like "folks like us" (i.e. the underclass) comes through loud and clear. Inequality, indifference, and unfairness are transformed into mythologies about conspiracy and oppression.[32]

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[31] The issue, for example, with all "voucherization" schemes is who gets vouchers (since virtually all social programs are funded at a level which allows participation by only a small proportion of program-eligible individuals) and how much vouchers are worth.

[32] By refering to these beliefs as mythologies I do not imply these are incorrect theories. In fact the construction of such mythologies can most easily be seen as a means of explaining how the world is, for example when groups who are, in fact, forced into ghettoes by housing prices develop mythologies of being "rounded up".

Clearly, a successful social policy for immigrant immigration must be fashioned to facilitate functional social integration and decrease the risks of dysfunctional integration. The link between being growing up in the U.S. and school failure is a case in point. As described by Matute-Bianchi and reported by Rumbaut, the adaptations of student groups identified as Chicanos as well as those of Cholos clearly involve a strategy of resistance. Short-term expediency may favor policies which foster social fragmentation but in the long-run, social policy which officially and explicitly encourages such fragmentation and which serves to increase distance among distinct groups is extremely frightening.

Initiatives, such as allowing all community residents, of legal and illegal immigration status to vote in local elections for school board, city council, or other bodies which are often dismissed out of hand as impractical, might, in fact, be the cheapest investment that could possible be made in terms of pro-active positive social policy to facilitate the integration of immigrants into California society. Support for achieving individual and group goals of "coming to mean something", "making a difference", or "counting for something, coupled with efforts to preserve traditional Mexican mutualism, might well be seen as a primary objective of social policy for rural California, on a par with physical and economic well-being, particularly if we adopt a medium to long-term multi-generational perspective. It may be instructive to explore further the differences between the *colonias* of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the *colonias* of California, communities which are equally poor in terms of family income but which sharply contrast in terms of political power and social coherence[33]

If the society's future political course is to buy into the Wilsonian argument that immigrant social policy decisions should really (reductionistically) be made on the basis of short-term fiscal implications, there are serious negative consequences. The tragic and frightening possibility that faces us is that immigrants may come to clearly hear and directly respond to the exclusionary message launched their way -- political disenfranchisement as a

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[33] The south Texas colonias were settled by arriving immigrants in an era when there was a de facto policy of welcoming immigrant families. In contrast to the contemporary farm labor market, most Mexican immigration consisted of intact families, mostly from Northeastern Mexico. The south Texas colonias we surveyed in the Farm Labor Supply Study were relatively coherent and functional communities. That is not to say there is clearly a happy ending, as many problems remain and one mode of dysfunctional adaption has been for the Bracero-era cohort of Texas immigrants to fuel their upward earnings growth by exploiting more recent immigrants groups as farm labor contractors in Florida, a cultural transition I have described in

symbol of White racial supremacism and ill faith, educational disenfranchisement as a symbol of society's commitment to an information society of haves and have-nots, sub-standard housing and inadequate funding for community infrastructure as a symbol of *apartheid*. The disastrous consequences of officially sanctioning discrimination based on arbitrary status, officially embracing policies which place immigrants in a "second class" status, set apart from "true" residents of our communities have been known for more than half a century. Our current policy is liable to make Gunnar Myrdal's reference to racism as "an American tragedy" a prophetic one.

Ironically, there is reason to believe that a societal message of welcome to immigrants would have only minor impacts on migration flows. Legal and illegal immigrants alike are already "welcomed" by employers seeking a low-wage, hard-working, disenfranchised labor force. The mixed and contradictory message of welcoming Mexican workers and not welcoming their families is, understandably, one designed to enhance corporate profits and, as many have observed, to shift the costs of "reproduction" of the labor force to Mexico as young, newly-arrived immigrants age and come to make more demands of their employers. The inescapable difficulty of this convenient industrial game plan is that this cost-effective short-term strategy to chalk up a better balance sheet has tremendous future social costs. We have quite probably passed a "tipping point" after which the economic and social integration of Mexico and the United States becomes, eventually, inevitable. The issue for both anti-immigrant nativists and pro-immigrant multi-culturalists is not really whether we can decide if California (and the nation) is to become a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society or not, but whether this inevitable future society is one torn by strife or a relatively functional one.

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some detail in my report "Mutualism to Merchandising" at the American Anthropology Association, Atlanta, 1994.